

## **HAND PLACEMENT INDICIA FOR SPORTS BALLS**

### **TECHNICAL FIELD**

[0001] The subject invention relates to sporting goods, and more specifically to sporting goods having instructive indicia disposed on the goods themselves for instructing people in the use of the goods.

### **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

[0002] By now skilled artisans in the field of sporting goods have recognized the benefit of very simple indicia disposed on the sporting goods to provide some instruction as to the use of the goods. For example, United States Design Patent 375,129 shows a very simple hand placement indicia on a football. United States Design Patent 329,674 and United States Patent 3,858,876 show very simple hand placement indicia on basketballs. This prior art shows where to place the hands on a ball, but it does not include additional helpful indicia that would assist people in using the balls. For example, there is little or no prior art with indicia showing how to place hands on a ball while the person is holding or controlling the ball; nor is there any prior art showing the manner in which the person should release a ball. One existing ball, the Hands-On™ ball marketed by Sportime,® has more detailed hand placement indicia. But the indicia on this ball teaches a hand

placement strategy different from the present strategy, one which involves placing the release hand in flat-handed contact with the ball, and fingertip-only contact with the support hand.

## **SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION AND ADVANTAGES**

[0003] According to one aspect of the invention, a sports ball includes a hand placement guide disposed thereon for indicating proper hand placement for a person's hands for effecting a release of the ball. The guide has a first image of a release hand including a representation of the hand's palm and fingers, where the representation of the palm has first indicia indicating that the person's palm should not touch the ball.

[0004] According to another aspect of the invention, a sports ball includes a hand placement guide disposed thereon for indicating proper hand placement for a person's hands for effecting a release of the ball. The guide includes a first image of a release hand including a representation of the hand's palm and fingers, where the representation of the fingers has indicia indicating that the person should release the ball with the three middle fingertips of the release hand.

[0005] According to this hand placement strategy, the user has better control over the release of the ball with the release hand for effecting a shot, a pass, a dribble, or the like.

## **FIGURES IN THE DRAWINGS**

[0006] The present invention will now be described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

[0007] Figure 1 is a front view of a basketball showing the image of a release hand;

[0008] Figure 2 is a side view of a basketball showing the image of a guide hand;

[0009] Figure 3 is a perspective view of a football showing a right release hand; and

[0010] Figure 4 is a perspective view of the same football rotated to show an image of the left release hand.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT**

[0011] The present invention will now be described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings in which a sports ball having a hand placement guide is generally shown at 10.

[0012] Generally, the hand placement guide 10 indicates proper hand placement for a person's hands for effecting a release of the ball. The

guide includes a first image 12 of a release hand including a representation of the hand's palm and fingers. The representation of the palm has a first indicia 14 indicating that the person's palm should not touch the ball. As shown in Figure 1, the indicia 14 includes the words, "NO TOUCH ZONE" together with the symbol for "No," and also red coloring. The representation of the fingers has second indicia generally shown at 16 indicating that the person should release the ball with the three middle fingers of the release hand. The representation of the fingers also has a third indicia 18 indicating that one of the fingers should be the last of the three middle fingers touching the ball at the end of the release.

[0013] The term "release" means the action of forcing the ball out of the hand in the context of some sporting activity. In football, the release is a passing or snapping of the ball, for example. In basketball, the release can be shooting, passing, or dribbling the ball, for example.

[0014] The second indicia 16 includes markings 20 disposed on the representation of the three middle fingers, and a legend 22 explaining the markings. The markings 20 are colored circles disposed at the tips of the three middle fingers. But any coloring, shading, or other marking may suffice. The legend 22 shown in the figures says, "3-Tip Release Points," but similar variations could also communicate the concept that the tips of the three middle fingers are important in handling and releasing the ball.

**[0015]** The third indicia 18 includes a marking on the representation of one of the fingers, and a legend explaining the marking. In the case of a basketball, the marking 18 is a star in the colored circle 20 on the middle finger, though variations on the marking could suffice. The legend 22 shown in the figures says, “Feel The Middle Last,” though other similar legends could be used, as long as they communicate the concept that the person should release the ball in a manner where the tip of the middle finger is the last part of the hand to contact the ball before the release. In the case of a football, the marking 18 is a star in the colored circle on the index finger, and the corresponding legend 22 says, “Feel The Index Last.”

**[0016]** The representation of the fingers may also include indicia generally shown at 21 indicating that the person should control the ball with the tips and pads of the fingers. The pad of the finger is the portion at the base of the finger adjacent the palm. The pads are indicated in the figures with oval indicia 23 at the base of each finger, and the oval indicia 23 are part of the indicia 21. The indicia 21 may also include the legend 24 saying “Pad & Tip Control” or the like, possibly supplemented with the arrows as shown. The purpose of this indicia 21 is to teach that the person should control the ball while holding and releasing it with the tips and pads of the fingers. The rest of the fingers should not contact the ball.

**[0017]** In one embodiment, shown in Figures 3 and 4, the ball is a

football and the representation of the fingers contacts the lacing of the football. Figures 3 and 4 show right and left release hands, respectively.

[0018] In another embodiment, shown in Figures 1 and 2, the ball is a round ball such as a basketball, and the round ball further includes a second image of a guide hand 26, the second image being spaced apart from the image of the first hand. Figure 1 shows a right-handed release hand at 12. But the typical ball would also include a left-handed release hand, and indeed this is shown in Figure 2 at 12'.

[0019] The image of the guide hand 26 includes three middle fingers 28 and a universal finger 30 on each side of the three middle fingers, where each universal finger can be either a thumb or a pinkie finger. In this manner, the image of the guide hand 26 represents either a left hand or a right hand.

[0020] If a person follows the directions printed by the hand placement guide, including the various indicia, the person will be able to control and release the ball in the proper way, which includes initiating a spin on the ball when the ball is released.

[0021] The invention has been described in an illustrative manner, and it is to be understood that the terminology that has been used is intended to be in the nature of words of description rather than of limitation.

[0022] Obviously, many modifications and variations of the present

invention are possible in light of the above teachings. Therefore, it is to be understood that within the scope of the appended claims the invention may be practiced otherwise than as specifically described. Moreover, the reference numerals are merely for convenience and are not intended to be in any way limiting.